

A  
CANDID AND IMPARTIAL  
NARRATIVE  
OF THE  
TRANSACTIONS  
OF THE  
FLEET,

UNDER THE COMMAND OF  
LORD HOWE,

FROM THE ARRIVAL OF THE TOULON SQUADRON, ON  
THE COAST OF AMERICA, TO THE TIME OF HIS  
LORDSHIP'S DEPARTURE FOR ENGLAND.

WITH  
OBSERVATIONS.

BY AN OFFICER THEN SERVING IN THE FLEET.

THE SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED,

WITH A PLAN OF THE SITUATION OF THE FLEET,  
WITHIN SANDY-HOOK.

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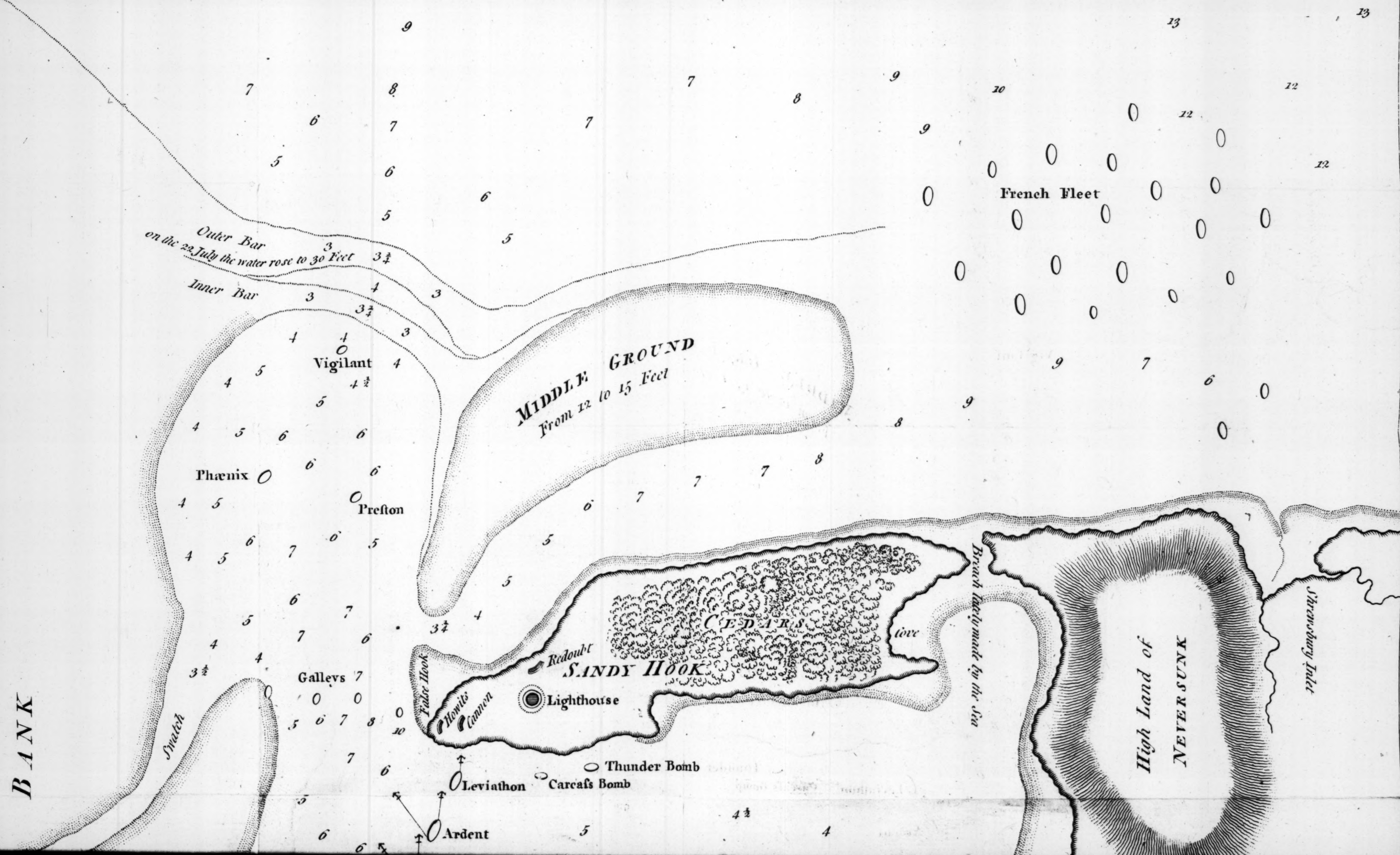
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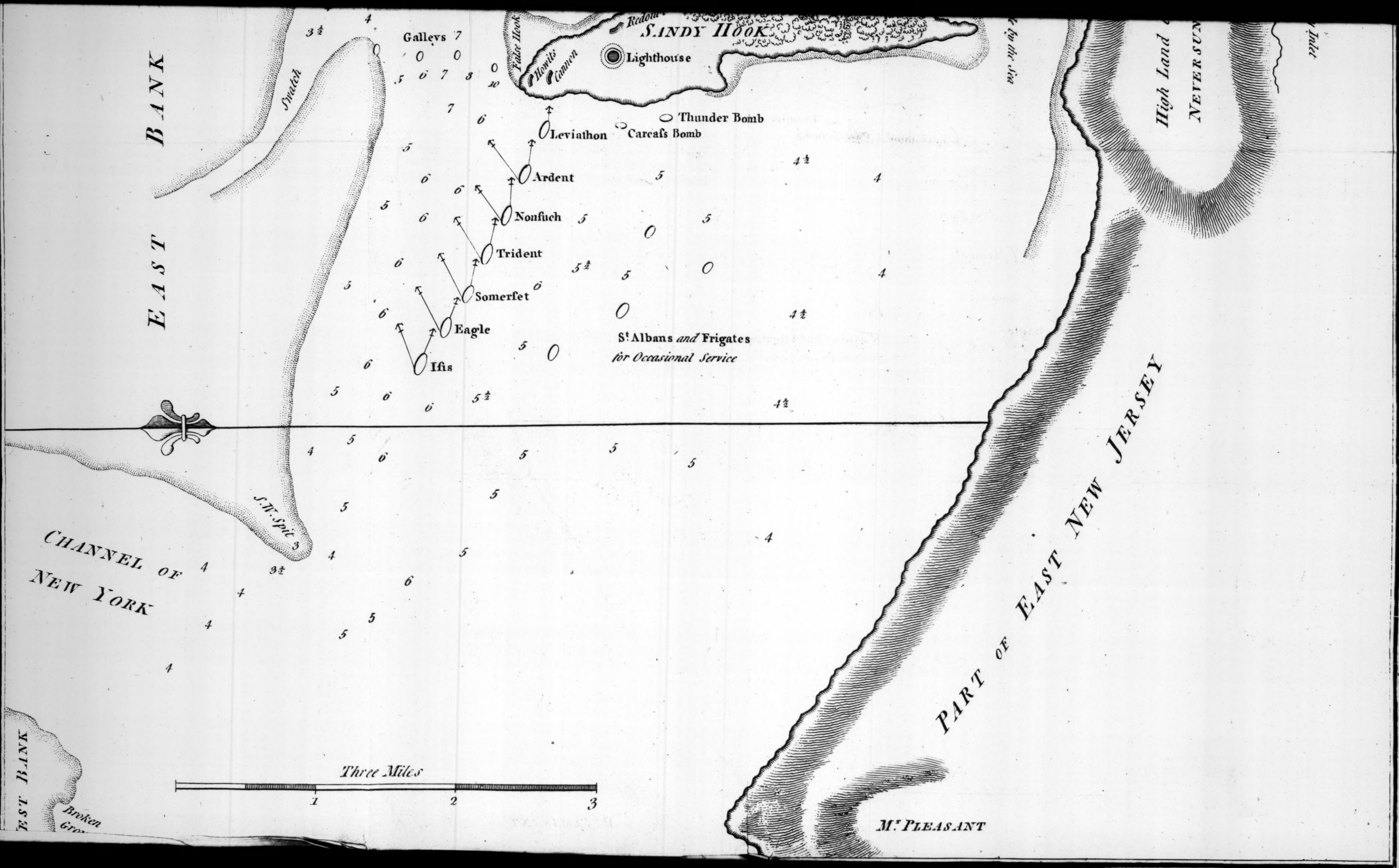
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# PLAN of the SITUATION of the FLEET within SANDY HOOK.







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SANDY HOOK

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*Explanation of the Plate.*

**T**H E anchors laid out on the larboard side of the ships in the line, were designed as springs to heave their broadsides up, to oppose any force that might attempt to come up the channel.

The Vigilant, Phenix and Preston were advanced to command the bar, to annoy the French fleet in passing it, and to endeavour to throw them into confusion, after which they were to drop into the rear of the fleet.

The four galleys were ranged across the narrow part of the channel, abreast the Hook; from which situation, in case of an attack, they could row in upon the shoal, and cannonade at such distance as should be most convenient for the purpose of annoying the enemy; their situation on the shoal would effectually prevent their being cut off.

The St. Albans and frigates were designed for a moving and occasional force, and lay within the line.

The figures mark the depth at low water.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE design of the following Narrative, is to do justice to a great and good man, by the best mode of justification that can be offered in his favour; a plain state of facts, an impartial account of his actions, submitted to public view. The writer acknowledges that he has not the honour of being in Lord Howe's secrets, or of being even distantly connected with him: yet the facts he relates will bear the strictest scrutiny, in point of truth; and his observations on those facts, shall be such as he formed on the spot; as arose from his own feelings at the time, or were suggested to him by officers of the first character, both in the navy and army. If he assign the reasons and motives of any of his Lordship's operations, or advert to the instructions and intelligence communicated to him from home, he does it from subsequent information, and chiefly from his Lordship's public letters.

He shall endeavour as much as possible to avoid a technical style; for he wishes to be understood



derstood by every class of readers, at the same time he does think it necessary to apologize to the public for obtruding on them the rough unpolished language of a seaman, little versed in the elegancies of composition, and unambitious of the praise of a brilliant diction, or the smooth flow of well-rounded periods. He shall often have occasion to advert to our present disgraceful situation; and some times to look forward to those additional miseries which infallibly await our perseverance in the destructive measures hitherto pursued, by a weak, ignorant Ministry; and while he points out to his oppressed countrymen the destroying sword hanging over their heads, and suspended but by a single hair, he cannot think that any among them will be so egregiously trifling, as to spend the time in examining its point, or determining whether it glitters or not.

His chief apology should be to the noble Lord, whose actions he attempts to relate. It will prove no very acceptable service, he fears, to his lordship, to be brought thus forward; or that a stranger should attempt what his own connections seem, by their silence, to think unnecessary. But he owns he has not philosophy enough to stifle his indignation, when he sees his gallant Commander, whom he has learned to revere for every

## 6 ADVERTISEMENT.

every great and good quality that can adorn the man or the officer, at the mercy of a set of men, whose interest it is to undermine his character, and misrepresent his conduct. He thinks the public have a right to be informed of the important services Lord Howe has rendered to his country; and of the ungrateful return he has met with at the hands, not of his country, but of some of the servants of the crown.

The narrative is confined to that period, in which the writer had the honour to serve under his lordship. His conduct in America, previous to that time, when thoroughly investigated, will prove to have been of a piece with the whole tenor of his life; will redound to his own honour, and the disappointment and confusion of his enemies.

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CANDID AND IMPARTIAL  
NARRATIVE.

**I**N consequence of the advices from England, with which the Porcupine arrived in the Delaware, in the beginning of May, Lord Howe began immediately to collect his scattered force. To the surprize of those who were ignorant of his motives, he called in his cruizers from the Chesapeak, and the other parts of the coast, and ordered the large ships from Rhode Island and New York to assemble at the mouth of the Delaware. The transports and victuallers were cleared from the wharves of Philadelphia with as much expedition as the moving of the army would admit; and on the 18th of June, Sir H. Clinton having completed the evacuation of Philadelphia, and entered the Jerseys on his rout to  
New

New York, the whole fleet assembled below Reedy Island. The large ships, as well those which had been ordered from Newport, as those which were stationed in the harbour of New York, were very imprudently detained by Rear Admiral Gambier, from the idea of the Vice Admiral being on the point of sailing for that port.

On leaving the Delaware, which calms and contrary winds rendered impracticable till the 28th of June, Lord Howe divided the fleet into different squadrons, each squadron under the immediate inspection of particular Captains, and ordering Captain Hammond to remain about the Capes, with some light cruizers, proceeded in the *Eagle* to New York, attended by the *Trident*, carrying the Commissioners, and the *Maidstone* frigate.

The fleet was particularly fortunate in its passage. The *Eagle* anchored at the Hook, the day [*June 29.*] after she had cleared Cape Henlopen, and we all joined her the following evening. By equal good fortune, Sir H. Clinton gained the Heights of Neverfink the succeeding morning, after a long and fatiguing march. Washington had, for several days, hung on his rear, and harrassed him by small parties, till by endeavouring, on the 28th, to cut off the baggage of the English army, he brought on a sharp



action at Freehold, wherein our rear guard repulsed two large detachments under La Fayette and Lee, and beat them back to the main body of the rebel army, pursuing them for four miles with much slaughter. The chief loss sustained by the British, was the death of Col. Monkton, one of the bravest officers in the army, and of the best beloved.

*June 29.* The morning of the day on which Lord Howe arrived at the Hook, he was met at sea by the Grantham packet, express from England. She brought advice that the Toulon squadron had sailed for America on the 15th of April; and informed his Lordship, that she had been chased by them, in a southern latitude, at no great distance from the coast. Her dispatches, bearing date the 2d of May, mentioned a strong reinforcement to be sent immediately under Vice Admiral Byron for *Halifax*.

The utmost expedition was now requisite to take off the troops, that, with the transports and victuallers, they might be placed in safety, and the fleet got in readiness for sea, to act as circumstances should require, and with a view to the destination of the squadron under Admiral Byron. The enemy did not dare to pass the heights of Middleton. The sick and wounded were therefore embarked without molestation, and the artillery and baggage taken off, while a bridge of

boats was throwing over the channel that separates Sandy-Hook from the main. This work was intrusted to Captain Duncan, and executed with the usual zeal and promptitude of that vigilant and industrious officer. On the 5th of *July* the whole army passed into the island, and from thence were carried in flat boats on board the fleet, without the loss of a man. Lord Howe attended in person, as usual; and by his presence animated the zeal, and quickened the industry, of officers and men.

This important service was scarce performed, and Commodore Hotham, with the men of war that lay off the town of New-York, arrived at the Hook, [*July* 7.] when a lieutenant from Captain Gardiner, whom the vice Admiral had dispatched to the southward on the first of *July*, returned in a letter of marque, acquainting his Lordship, that the Toulon squadron was seen by the Maidstone, on the coast of Virginia, the 5th of the month. That, by their course, they seemed at first to be bound for the Chesapeak; but that on attending their motions to the morning of the 8th, Captain Gardiner had left them at anchor in the Delaware. This account was confirmed the same evening, by the arrival of the Roebuck, and some of our small cruizers; and while the vice-admiral was employed, in consequence, in collecting his small force, and preparing every



for every emergency, the captain of the Zebra arrived [*July 11.*] on board the Eagle, bringing intelligence, that a fleet of 12 sail two-decked ships, and three frigates, appeared the evening before, under French colours, holding their course for New-York. At 12 o'clock the same day, a signal was made, from one of our frigates without the bar, that they had hove in sight ; and in the afternoon they were observed to come to anchor off Shrewsbury inlet, about four miles from Sandy-Hook.

It is not in the power of words to do justice to the spirit that blazed forth throughout the navy and army on this occasion. Six sail of sixty-four gun ships, three of fifty, two of forty, with some frigates and sloops, for the most part wretchedly manned, were all the force Lord Howe had to oppose to twelve sail of two-deck ships, and three frigates. Of these one carried 90 guns, one 80, six were of 74 guns, three of 64, one of 50 ; the least of the frigates mounted 36. Their complement in men was above eleven thousand. Yet the spirit of Britons, roused by the superior genius of one man, and influenced to second his exertions to a height of emulation scarcely paralleled in history, set them at defiance.

A thousand volunteers from the transports presented themselves to man the fleet. Scarce could the agents detain sufficient hands for the watch of

their respective ships. Many, whose names were omitted in the lists given in to the adjutant of the fleet, were found concealed in the boats which carried their more fortunate companions on board the several men of war. The army, idolatrous of the admiral's character, were equally forward and impatient to signalize their zeal, in a line of service, new, and, independent of the spirit that animated them, unpleasant and disgusting to men unaccustomed to a sea-life. The grenadiers and light-infantry scarcely recruited from the fatigues of a toilsome and dangerous march; many of the officers with their wounds still green, were obliged to cast lots, to determine the companies which, with the general's approbation, were accepted to serve as marines---The masters and mates of the merchantmen and traders in the harbour, solicited employment with equal earnestness and spirit. Several of them took their stations at the guns with the common sailors: others obtained permission to put out to sea in their small swift-sailing shallops, to alarm such ships as might be bound for the port, and to look out for Byron's fleet, if fortunately it should reach the coast. One, in particular, his name was Duncan, with a spirit of disinterested bravery, and in language worthy of an old Roman, wrote for leave to convert his ship, the whole hopes of his fortune, into a fire-vessel, to be conducted

ducted by himself; rejecting every mention of reward.

In this struggle of magnanimity, it was observed, with rapture, that the spirit which had raised the British nation above the rest of Europe for so many ages past, was not extinct; that it only wanted to be awakened, and properly directed, to blaze out with as bright a lustre as ever distinguished the most fortunate and brilliant of our days. From the commanders and officers those sallies of heroism were naturally expected; their education, the seeds planted in their minds from their earliest infancy, and cherished by the spirit of their profession, it was natural to expect would produce such sentiments as fit and prepare the mind for these sudden and trying emergencies. But in the common men it was the spontaneous growth of the soil we saw exuberantly breaking forth; and as long as this flourished, there could be no reason to despair of the health and vigour of the country.

Such were the sentiments, such the reflections throughout the fleet and army; and all gloried in them, as reflecting honour on their country. But what must have been the feelings of that man, who shared the glory with his country; and who, notwithstanding the unaffected modesty of his character, must have been conscious that all this zeal and emulation, in both corps,  
was



was as much personal to himself, as he boasted it to be national?

Encouraged by such earnestness of determined bravery in the men, and assured of the merit and skill of his seconds and officers, he lost not a moment in forming his disposition. The Eagle and Trident, the Isis, Roebuck, Phoenix, and Pearl, which had moved up to Staten Island to take in water, with the Ardent, from which Gambier had been ordered to shift his flag, fell down from the watering place on the first intimation of the approach of the French. A contrary wind preventing them from joining the detachment of the squadron that had been left at the Hook, with all the expedition the danger seemed to require, the vice admiral quitted the Eagle, and throwing himself into his barge, hastened to the ships below. But D'Estaing, instead of crossing the bar immediately, in the hope of surprising our fleet, which it was natural to suppose he came prepared to attempt, anchored, as is mentioned before, at the distance of four miles from the Hook.

Here he remained for several days, employed at times in sounding the bar, and wearing every appearance of a determination to enter and attack the port. Lord Howe improved this interval by placing his ships in the strongest position the channel within the Hook would admit. He founded

founded its several depths in person ; he ascertained the different setting of the currents, and from the observations thus made, formed different plans with a view to the points of wind with which D'Estaing might resolve to cross the bar. These plans, with the grounds on which they rested, he daily communicated to the commodores and captains, soliciting their opinions, and desirous of profiting by their objections. His line he lengthened by the addition of the Leviathan store-ship, manned by volunteers for the occasion, and supplied with cannon from the train. A battery of two howitzers, and one of three eighteen pounders, were erected on the point round which the enemy must have passed to enter the channel ; while four regiments, under the command of Colonel O'Hara, were ordered by General Clinton to the Hook, lest the enemy should attempt to possess it, and annoy us from so dangerous a quarter.

In the mean time, we had the daily mortification to see several of our traders fall into the enemy's hands. The Stanley armed brig, commanded by a gallant young man, son to Sir Charles Whitworth, with five prizes, anchored in the midst of their fleet, during the night, thinking them to be British, and was boarded before he could discover the mistake. Several tenders, however, and advice-boats, escaped  
over

over the flats, and prevented the Hope, with a convoy from Halifax, from adding to our losses and indignation.

From the time the French squadron first anchored off Shrewsbury, boats and small vessels were seen constantly passing to and from the shore, for supplies of water and provisions. On the 21st of *July* this intercourse was observed to cease; and it was, in consequence, supposed that some movement was in agitation. The succeeding day proved our conjectures to be well-founded. The wind blew fresh at north-east, and by eight o'clock D'Estaing, with all his squadron, appeared under way. He kept working to windward, as if to gain a proper position for crossing the bar by the time the tide should serve. The wind could not be more favourable for such a design; it blew from the exact point by which he could attack us to the greatest advantage. The spring tides were at the highest, and raised that afternoon thirty feet on the bar. We consequently expected the hottest day that had ever been fought between the two nations. On our side all was at stake. Had the men of war been defeated, the fleet of transports and victuallers must have been destroyed, and the army, of course, have fallen with us; yet, under Heaven, we had not the least doubt of success. D'Estaing, however, had not spirit equal to the risk; at three o'clock



o'clock we saw him bear off to the southward, and in a few hours he was out of sight.

On reading this account, the public must have felt some portion, at least, of the rage and indignation that were mingled with this spirit of heroism in our brave fellows. while they reflected on their situation. They could not but consider themselves as forgotten, abandoned, marked out as sacrifices to the dastardly councils or interested designs of the first lord of the admiralty. If the sailing of La Mothe Picquet had not been a sufficient indication of the hostile designs of the French, and of their views on America, yet was it known for certain that the Toulon squadron had sailed for that country in the middle of April. The accounts were communicated to administration the latter end of that month; yet the 29th of July had not brought a single ship to reinforce our fleet, or enable us to meet the enemy. Had the French squadron arrived a few days sooner, or had the evacuation of Philadelphia been deferred a few days later (and the inauspicious appearance of the new commissioners had well nigh effected it) the whole force of Great Britain on that side the Atlantic must have been annihilated. D'Estaing would have surprised Lord Howe in the Delaware, with two ships of 64 guns, one of 50, two of 40, and a few frigates, encumbered with a fleet of transports, victuallers,

victuallers, and private traders, laden, for the most part, with the refugees from Philadelphia, their families, and the wrecks of their fortunes. All the conduct of this skilful commander must, in that crisis, have been ineffectual; all his courage could have done, or the bravery of his officers, would have been to sell their lives at the dearest price; and add, to the other miseries of their country, the loss of some of the most gallant men she hath ever produced. General Clinton would have reached the sea-side, in the vain expectation of meeting his transports. His army fatigued; the whole rebel force in his rear; no provisions, no prospect of procuring them; no possibility of a retreat; an enemy's squadron perhaps riding in triumph, where he expected to find a faithful associate, in whose disinterested zeal he had learned to place the most boundless confidence. and the surest hopes of a retreat, after he had acted his own part; such would have been the inevitable situation of this *saving physician*; he would have met, as the rebels prognosticated to him, the *fate* of Burgoyne, without meriting his *disgrace*.

At the same time, we heard it was boasted at home, that the nation had forty sail of the line ready to put to sea on the most sudden emergency. From the immense sums that had been granted for the navy supplies, and the length of  
time

time administration had had to guard against the designs of our natural, and at all times perfidious enemy, the boast gained credit ; but our astonishment and indignation were only the more increased. Could the first lord of the admiralty talk the nation into a belief that all this force was requisite for our home defence, while, with the same breath, he represented the French navy so much inferior to the British ? Could he make them believe, that, from forty sail of the line, perfectly equipped, not the smallest reinforcement could be detached, at the only time when such a step could prove essentially serviceable, to the relief of thirty thousand British subjects, and a respectable part of the navy, exposed to almost certain ruin ? Succours were indeed promised ; but almost three months had elapsed, and we still looked for them in vain. Boiling with indignation and the thirst of revenge, in vain we cast our eyes each hour towards the sea, in the anxious hope of seeing the British colours advancing to our relief. Little did we imagine that they were kept idly waving in the harbour of Portsmouth, for the entertainment of *fops and holiday dames* !—Providence alone interfered in our deliverance ; nor can we desire a more encouraging proof that Heaven has not yet utterly abandoned this nation, than these transactions exhibit. The French fleet had a tedious passage.



After arriving on the coast, twenty-four hours were thrown away in chasing the Mermaid, and they afterwards remained forty-eight hours at anchor in the Delaware. Lord Howe (for this depended on his own vigilance and activity) had the earliest intelligence of their approach; was instantly informed of all their movements. He had time to place the fleet of transports in safety; to see the army equally secure; to concentrate his forces, and form such dispositions, as, in the end, effectually disappointed the sanguine hopes of the rebels, and their faithless allies, and defeated the chief object of this boasted, and admirably concerted expedition. We experienced, no doubt, the worst of insults and mortifications. A British fleet blocked up by a squadron of Frenchmen! and in our own harbour! Vessels, bearing English colours, daily captured in our sight! To have gone out to their assistance, even had it been practicable, would have been the extreme of madness, since to have been able to defend ourselves where we lay, would, in the opinion of the most gallant officers in the fleet, have been the utmost that human valour could accomplish. Yet a gentleman, who at the time obtruded himself into the society of those officers, who, in their company, was the loudest in bewailing our deplorable situation, and the desperate card Lord Howe was forced to play—whose invectives  
against

against the first Lord of the Admiralty, as evidently designing, by a delay of succours, to destroy or disgrace the Vice Admiral, were the most pointed and virulent. This gentleman now hesitates not to assert, that Lord Howe enjoyed a superiority over the French Commander, and should be accountable to the public for not having availed himself of this superiority. I write not from the information of the shameless Editor of the Morning Post. That he hath hazarded this assertion to men in power, I know from the most respectable authority. Yet this man was once a sea officer! The lists of both fleets lie before the public; let them answer this very experienced captain.

Nor can that gentleman be offended if his assertions on this subject be esteemed, by the writer of this narrative, so rash and ignorant as to deserve no other refutation than what must occur to the meanest capacity—to those who are the least conversant in navy matters. The same lists shall stand in opposition even to higher authority; to the authority of the great Lord who so *worthily* presides over the navy department. For he too, from his place in parliament, when called upon officially to quiet the fears of the people, blushed not to have recourse to misinformation and falsehood—Dared to impose upon the nation in a point wherein her most essential and dearest interests

terests were at stake, and solemnly declared the British Vice Admiral in America, to be at the head of a fleet equal to his defence against all the attempts of the Toulon squadron, independent of any succours from home. His heart, at the time, gave him the lie. He well knew that had the British Vice Admiral in America been able, *in consequence of the advice received in May*, to collect his fleet, scattered from Halifax to the Gulf of Florida, for the purpose of distressing the rebel trade, yet he could only have had the *Raisonable* of 64, the *Centurion* of 50, and the *Rainbow* of 44 guns in addition to his force at New York, when D'Estaing, *who had sailed in April*, should first arrive on the coast. But perhaps I wrong the noble Lord; he no doubt meant honestly. As a landsman he might have supposed, that the equality or inequality of fleets consisted only in the comparative number of ships, however disproportioned they might be in number of guns, weight of metal, or respective complements of men. As a landsman, his Lordship might not have known, that in the summer season, from the prevalency of the south-west winds, the voyage from Halifax to New York, is nearly as precarious as it can be from Portsmouth; or that, as Halifax is the only harbour where the large men of war could repair whatever essential damages they might have sustained in their winter



ter and spring cruizes, it was more than probable some of them should be then confined at that port. The candid public will, no doubt, admit this fair and satisfactory apology. The virtuous and untainted character his Lordship enjoys in private life, must remove every suspicion of treachery in his official conduct. A man so good, a patriot so incorruptible, could never hazard the glory and safety of his country, and the blood of her citizens, from a selfish pique; in the narrow view of disgracing a man, whose fame he is said to envy, whose character and principles may hold him in awe. Ignorance in the business of his department, is his Lordship's misfortune, not his fault; and it would be unfair to assign any other cause why he should retain our fleet in port for the parade of a naval review, at a time, when from every information the Ministry had received, the fate of England might have been decided in America, and thousands of British subjects or butchered, or reduced to thralldom.—But more of this hereafter.

The French squadron continuing to stand to sea on the afternoon of the 22d of July, instructions were sent to the advice boats, that were stationed on the Flats without the Bar, to follow and observe their motions. From the unanimous report of the people of the country, who escaped to us from the Jersey shore, as well as from  
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D'Estaing's movements, previous to that afternoon, it was gathered that the enemy's design was to force the port of New-York. It was not unreasonable therefore to suppose, that their bearing away to the southward, was owing to the appearance of an easterly gale, which, as it should blow directly on the coast, must have rendered their former situation extremely dangerous, and that their return might speedily be expected. Advice however was received, that they were seen on the morning of the 23d, about thirty leagues from the land, in the latitude of the Delaware, steering by the wind, which was then at east, on the larboard tack. The Delaware frigate was ordered on the look out, and we, at the same time, received an unexpected accession of force by the arrival of the *Renown* from the West Indies. [*July 26.*] Even a single fifty-gun ship was then of such infinite consequence to us, that it was matter of exultation in the fleet to learn that she had passed unnoticed through the rear of the French, in the dusk of the preceding evening.

The same day the *Dispatch* returned from Halifax. As the Admiralty had given Lord Howe to understand, that Byron's squadron was destined for that port (why they should have been destined for that port, was not within the powers of common sense to guess) his Lordship had ordered

ed this sloop thither on the first certain knowledge he had that the French fleet were advanced to the Delaware. Her dispatches brought no mention of Byron; but they made some amends, by informing the Admiral, that the *Raisonable* and *Centurion* were on their way to New York, and in two or three days they both joined us in safety. The *Raisonable* so narrowly escaped the French fleet, that she saw them the evening of the 27th, steering for Rhode Island. Had those ships appeared a few days sooner, either they must have been prevented from forming a junction with our squadron, and forced again to sea, or we should have had the mortification to see them increase the triumph of our enemy.

The same would also have been the fate of the *Cornwal*, a 74 gun ship of Byron's squadron, that crossed the Bar on the 30th. With indignation it was known by her report, that the reinforcement had not sailed from Plymouth before the ninth of June, that even then they were kept beating through the Channel for three days in a thick fog, without having received their final orders, so that had they been then separated, not a captain in the squadron would have known his destination; that the *Cornwal* had parted from them the 3d of July in a gale of wind, and that from the miserable condition in which they had at first put to sea, from the state of their masts

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and rigging, and the diseases amongst their crews, there was more reason to tremble for their safety than to look for their arrival.

The fortunate junction of so many detached ships, and their arriving at so happy a moment, counterbalanced, in some degree, this alarming intelligence. It was now known for certain that the French fleet had sailed for Rhode Island; and whatever little prospect of success, our force, even after the late addition, could open to us, yet the post was of such importance, and the fate of so large a portion of the British army as formed the garrison, of such infinite consequence to the general cause, that it was imagined the Admiral would not lose a moment in making some attempt for their relief. The accounts received by his lordship, subsequent to the report of the Raifonable, as appears from the public letters, favoured such an attempt. These accounts intimated, that on the morning of the 29th, the French fleet had appeared off Newport harbour. That two of their frigates had entered the Seconnet passage the same day. That the next morning two line of battle ships had run up the Naraganset passage, and anchored off the north end of Conanicut, and that the remainder of the squadron were at anchor without Brenton's Ledge, about five miles from the town. In this divided situation, some opportunity

portunity might offer, of which advantage could be taken, for the relief of the garrison, and the preparations for sea were hastened with this view. The twenty-third regiment, under the command of Lieut. Col. Balfour, came down volunteers to serve on board the fleet, relieving the grenadiers and light infantry, whom Sir H. Clinton had withdrawn to be re-embodied. Two additional fireships, constructed by the Vice-Admiral's orders, joined him at the same time, and all things were in readiness for sea by the first of August. But the signal to weigh had scarce been made, when the wind veered round to the southward, and not returning fair, so as to correspond with the time of high-water on the bar, till the morning of the 6th, we could not make Rhode Island before the evening of the 9th, when we anchored between point Judith and the light-house. From the report of the frigates sent on a-head, the French fleet were at anchor within the harbour. By this means the communication with Brenton's Neck was open, and the Vice-Admiral had an opportunity of receiving immediate intelligence, both from Sir R. Pigot and Captain Brisbane. They informed him that D'Estaing, after having remained at anchor off Brenton's Ledge from the 29th of July, had, the afternoon before we arrived, entered the harbour under an easy sail, cannonading the town and batteries as he passed,

and receiving their fire without any material effect on either side, and anchored above the town, between Goat Island and Conanicut. That the two line of battle ships still kept their stations in the Naraganset and the frigates in the Seconnet. That the Wednesday before we appeared, it had been found necessary to destroy the Orpheus, Lark, Juno, and Cerberus frigates; that several merchantmen had been sunk in the channel, to prevent the enemy from approaching near enough to attack the batteries to advantage, and that on D'Estaing's entering the harbour, the Flora and Falcon had also been sunk; that the men belonging to the several ships were all on shore, and encamped by themselves, to be disposed of at the General's pleasure.

From Sir R. Pigot he learned that the rebel army, with which the Toulon squadron was to co-operate, was assembled on the Connecticut shore, all round the island. Small parties of them had taken possession of Conanicut, from whence he had previously withdrawn his troops, as he had also from all the out-posts on the northern extremity of Rhode Island. Craft of all kinds were ready to transport the enemy to whatever part they should mark out for the descent. Sir Robert had caused several additional works to be thrown up on the heights adjacent to Newport, to which he meant to confine his defence, and



and was himself posted, with his chief strength, on Tommeney Hill, a very high eminence, that commands the principal approaches to the town.

Various were the conjectures throughout the fleet, with regard to the probable resolutions which the Vice Admiral might form in consequence of those advices. The French, with all their former superiority of force, now enjoyed a position infinitely stronger than that on which we depended at Sandy Hook. The rebels were possessed of the left-hand shore, the whole length of the harbour. They consequently could not only annoy us on our entrance and approach from the craggy heights of Conanicut, close to which we must have past, but in the course of an attack against D'Estaing, as he then lay, bring whatever number of guns they chose to bear upon us from the northern extremity of that island. The most skilful officers were therefore of opinion, that the Vice Admiral could not risque an attack; and it appears by his lordship's public letter, that this was also his own opinion: "under such circumstances he judged it was impracticable to afford the General any essential relief."

The next morning totally altered the scene. The wind had changed to the north-east, and blew directly out of the harbour. About eight o'clock a heavy cannonade was heard towards  
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the town, and in a short time the French squadron appeared standing out to sea with all their sail aboard. Ten sail formed a line of battle a-head, advancing through the Middle Channel, and were joined without the light-house by the two ships from the Naraganset. Lord Howe immediately made the signal to get under way, and the British fleet stood to sea. By this movement it was evident his lordship had two objects in view. To get time and space to form his disposition to his wishes, and either to profit by the sea breeze, should it set in, as from every appearance it was conjectured it would, or by manœuvring to gain the weather gage from the enemy. This was an object of the greatest importance. Should his lordship await the French Admiral, and attack him to leeward, the fireships, in which were placed the greatest hopes of success against a force so superior, not only could not have been brought into action, but would have also obliged the large frigates, which had them in charge, to remain inactive. The whole of that day was therefore employed in endeavouring by several masterly manœuvres to throw the enemy to leeward. But they appeared to be equally attentive to the same object; and discovered as great sollicitude to preserve their advantages as the English Admiral was to wrest it from them.

Night

Night came on. The Apollo was ordered to stand between the two fleets, within view of our lights, and by private signals to intimate the enemy's situation, as long as she could keep them in sight. By these means we found ourselves at the dawn of the next day, in the same relative position, though at somewhat a greater distance, than the preceding evening. The wind still hung to the eastward, blowing fresh. The weather was extremely thick and hazy; no prospect of a change appeared. The Vice Admiral therefore ordered the frigates which had the charge of the fireships to be informed, that should the enemy continue to preserve the weather gage, he should await their approach with the squadron formed in a line of battle a-head from the wind to the star-board. At the same time the fleet beheld him, with infinite satisfaction, take a decisive step that strongly marks his character, and shews him to be above the little fears and apprehensions of those, who, to avoid the whispers of the ignorant, act against their own judgment. It has ever been acknowledged, that any station in the line is the most improper a commander in chief can choose in the time of action. As soon as the ship, in which he is embarked, engages, his abilities can be of no more consequence or service than those of any other captain in his fleet. But to break through established customs, and be the first



first to try the experiment, where malice might throw a sneer at his personal bravery, required a man who possessed other qualities of mind than are merely requisite to form the seaman. Lord Howe was convinced of the utility of the measure, and this alone determined him to pursue it. In his situation indeed the expediency was particularly obvious. Engaged with such unequal force, the chief hope of success was placed in the skill and abilities of the commander in chief, in his taking advantage of every fortuitous occurrence, and drawing every scruple of his little force into its proper point. He therefore shifted his flag on board the Apollo frigate, leaving the Eagle in the centre, and moved to a convenient distance to take a view of the whole line. As he gained by this a nearer observation of the French fleet, his lordship, perceiving, as we supposed, that D'E-staing had placed his largest ships in his van, thought proper to strengthen the rear of the British to receive their attack, and made a signal for the Cornwall to move from the centre and change stations with the Centurion. About four o'clock the French Admiral altered his bearing, and new formed his line to engage to leeward. Lord Howe crossed through the interstices of our line with the frigates and fire vessels, and in a few minutes after made a signal for the ships to shorten sail, and close to the centre. In this movement  
he

he was obeyed to the admiration of the oldest officer, as indeed he had been in the several manœuvres he had put in practice either to gain the wind, or preparatory to the intended attack. We now expected every instant to hear our rear engaged with the French van; but in a short time they again altered their course, and bearing away to the southward, were soon, from the state of the weather, entirely out of sight.

The wind at this time blew so fresh, that our ships were under close reefed topsails; and the sea ran so high, that Lord Howe would not venture on board his own ship. He therefore made the signal from the Apollo, that he meant to lie to, for the night, on the starboard tack, to prevent separation. Yet so dark and hazy was the weather, and to such violence did the gale increase, that in the morning the blue division was totally divided from the fleet. The centre and van, with most of the frigates and fireships, still kept together. At noon the squadron was alarmed by a signal of distress from the Apollo, and in a few minutes after, her main-topmast was seen to go overboard. The ship, in which the writer of this narrative served, kept sight of the flag until eleven o'clock that night, from which time, till the 17th, in the evening, the greater part of the fleet were ignorant of his lordship's situation, and under the greatest anxiety for his fate. It after-

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wards was known to us, that the Apollo having lost her foremast also on the night of the 12th, he had been tost about till the next day, when, as the gale moderated, he was taken up by Captain Hammond, and carried on board the Phoenix, then in company with the Centurion, Ardent, Richmond, Vigilant and Roebuck. On the 15th he discovered the French fleet partly at anchor about 25 leagues to the eastward of Cape May, and after having viewed their position, and left the Centurion to direct the dispersed ships of his own squadron, or such of Vice Admiral Byron's as might arrive to follow him, he directed his course for the rendezvous at the Hook. Here he found the rest of the fleet, which had also been much dispersed. The Roebuck appeared without her mizen-topmast. The Reasonable brought in her bowsprit, the Cornwall her mainmast, sprung. The fireships were so much damaged by the wet, as to be, for sometime, totally unfit for service. Besides those damages caused by the storm, the Isis returned much shattered and disabled, from a gallant action she had sustained for an hour and an half with a French seventy-four.

The French fleet were much more severely handled. On the evening of the 13th, towards dusk, Captain Dawson, in the Renown of fifty guns, fell in with the Languedoc, carrying Monsieur



ficur D'Estaing totally dismasted. He ran down close under her lee, and being there haled, and ordered to shew his colours, gave her all his upper-deck guns. He then stood off to windward, and opening his lower ports, wore round under her stern, and at half a cable's length, poured in three broadsides. Among other damages, he shot away her rudder. It then was so dark, and blew so fresh, that Dawson resolved to lie to for the night, in the resolution of renewing his attack the next morning. But at the first dawn, six French ships hove in sight, three of which gave him chase, and three remained with the wreck.

The same evening, and about the same hour, Commodore Hotham, in the *Preston* of 50 guns, also crossed the *Tonnant*, their 80 gun ship, with only her mainmast standing. He engaged her with the greatest advantage till night forced him to draw off, in the same design that Dawson had formed, and with the same certainty of success. But he was disappointed by a similar unfortunate intervention of part of the French squadron.

A third action, as brilliant as any on record in the history of the English navy, was fought the same day between the *Isis* of 50 guns, commanded by Captain John Raynor, and the *Cæsar* of 74, with a flag at her mizen-mast, in com-

plete order. Raynor, returning to the rendezvous, first discovered her force about three in the afternoon, and endeavoured to escape her; but she proved the fastest sailer. In a short time they were close on board each other, and engaged for an hour and half within pistol shot. The skill and address of the British Captain, his intrepidity and resolution during so unequal a contest, seconded by the ardour and bravery of his men and officers, who all placed the utmost confidence in his abilities, at length forced the Frenchman to put before the wind, and fly with all her sails. The *Isis* was incapable of pursuing him, having suffered greatly in her masts and rigging, at which the enemy pointed all his guns. Raynor directed his to better purpose. Bougainville lost his arm, the first lieutenant his leg, and they acknowledged seventy men killed and wounded.\* The modesty and reserve that strike us in Raynor's public account of this glorious action, add new lustre to his gallantry; recommend him the more forcibly to the public, and are characteristic of the true hero. The Duke of Ancaſter, tho' arrived from England only the day before we sailed, obtained leave to serve on board the *Isis*, and was greatly distinguished during the action.

\* In the *Isis* 14 were wounded, and one man of the 23d killed in the tops.

On the fleet being re-assembled, the attention of the Vice Admiral was instantly directed to the speedy repair of the disabled ships. The *Isis*, with the *Apollo* and fireships, were sent up to New York, and such stores ordered down as were requisite for the supply of the ships that could be repaired at the Hook. The *Experiment* was dispatched [August 18.] to explore the state of affairs at Newport, and the condition of the garrison, and the *Ariel* and *Galatea* sent to cruize, the one to the southward; the other to the northward. The same day the *Monmouth*, one of Byron's ill-fated squadron, with her main-mast sprung, and her men wasted with disease, joined the fleet.

The essential repairs requisite for so many ships, unavoidably employed several days, during which the Vice Admiral received information that the French squadron had returned to Rhode Island. The *Experiment* [23d] had been chased into the Sound by three of their large ships, and had returned to New York through Hellgate; the first two-decker that had ever attempted that dangerous passage. The *Venus* and *Galatea* confirmed the accounts. The latter had seen eleven sail of the line, including the two dismasted ships, at anchor off the harbour of Newport, on the evening of the 20th, and left them in the same situation the following day.



The morning after Lord Howe had received this intelligence, and while he was waiting for the tide to begin crossing the Bar, the disabled ships, except the *Ifis* and the *Apollo*, being then nearly compleated, Lieutenant Stanhope arrived from Rhode Island, from whence he made his escape in a whale-boat, the Friday before, at the utmost risque of his life.\* His information was, that he had left the French fleet at anchor off the harbour's mouth; that, as the wind had since then continued at east, it was not probable they could be got in; that the rebels, in number more than twenty thousand, were advanced within fifteen hundred yards of our works; that Sir R. Pigot was under no apprehensions from any of their attempts in front; but that should the French fleet come in, he ordered him to say, it would make an alarming change. Troops might be landed at Brenton's Neck, according to the original plan agreed upon between the rebels and the French, and advance upon his rear, and in that case he could not answer for the consequences.

On this information Lord Howe immediately crossed the Bar, and being joined in the night by

\* He had passed unperceived through the body of the French fleet, and coasting along the outward shore of Long Island met with so heavy a sea, as exposed his boat to be swamped at each instant.

the Experiment and fireships from New York, and a number of volunteers for the Monmouth, sailed the next morning for Newport. A reinforcement from Clinton's army was at the same time to be sent through the Sound for the relief of the garrison. Lord Howe was to favour their approach by drawing off the French fleet, and endeavouring to bring them to action; but being met at sea by the Galatea with dispatches from General Pigot, by which it appeared that D'E-  
staing had, on the night, between the Friday and Saturday, sailed from his anchorage off point Judith, and steered in a course for Boston, he detached the Nautilus, Sphynx and Vigilant to Rhode Island, and stood on with his squadron in quest of the enemy. As it was not probable that they would attempt to navigate their large ships in their disabled state through the South Channel, within George's Bank, the Vice Admiral was in hopes, that by following that course, he might intercept them in their approach to Boston Bay. These hopes were confirmed by the Captain of the privateer-brig Resistance, taken by our fleet on the 28th. He had been sent from Boston the preceding Monday, to look out for the French squadron, and pilot them into Boston. But as he had sailed down the channel, and seen nothing of them, he supposed they had steered round the Bank.

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The morning of the 30th brought us into Boston Bay. The fleet continued under sail, while the Roebuck and Experiment were sent forward to look into the harbour, and by private signals to intimate to the Admiral, whether the French squadron were arrived or not ; or if arrived, where anchored. Between four and five we had the mortification to learn, by a signal from the Experiment, that they were lying in Nantasket Road.

The next day the Vice Admiral, meaning to take advantage of a leading wind to view their position, was prevented by the St. Alban's running on shore near the point of Cape Cod. He effected his purpose, however, on the 1st of September, when finding them so strongly posted, under cover of the strong works constructed on the islands which command the Nantasket Road and Channel, that no attempt could be made upon them with the least prospect of success, he lost not a moment in returning to the assistance of Newport. But he had already effectually relieved that important garrison ; Sullivan, on the retreat of his allies, and the account of the British fleet being failed in pursuit of them, thought proper to retire from before the place, charging his ill success to the failure of promise on the part of D'Estaing.

Thus,



Thus, by a happy mixture of prudent and bold measures, by a series of manœuvres, which the naval tactick was scarcely thought capable of exhibiting; by an indefatigable zeal, and an ardent attention to take advantage of every occurrence; by the unconquerable and persevering spirit with which his example inspired every officer and seaman under his command, Lord Howe, having, with forces so unequal, defeated all the great designs of the enemy, protected the army and the fleet of transports at New-York, raised the siege at Rhode-Island, and driven the French squadron into the port of Boston, whence their shattered condition would not suffer them to venture for a length of time, returned to New-York, and to the infinite regret both of navy and army, resigned the command into the hands of Rear Admiral Gambier.\*

From

\* The sending out such a successor to Lord Howe, at so critical a juncture, was the bitterest of the many insults passed by the first Lord of the Admiralty on the navy officers serving in America. Gambier succeeding to a command which required the abilities of a Howe, and being placed at the head of the gallant men who were formed under that great commander, was as degrading to them, as it might have been fatal to the nation. Let it not be answered, as I remember the great Lord once urged in his own defence, on an occasion somewhat similar, that it was never designed he should serve as commander in chief, and that Byron was on

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From this impartial detail of facts, the public shall judge between the infamous hints and aspersions thrown out by the abettors of a Sandwich and the conduct of Lord Howe. They will judge how much the nation is indebted to that good man and brave officer, whose character they have heard so insidiously undermined. They will blush at the cruel and unjust treatment with which his services are repaid, and will turn their indignation against the tools of a vicious man, who by ignorance and treachery, had well nigh sacrificed—I will not say the British empire in America—that phantom is vanished—but the lives of thirty thousand brave fellows who had so long fought and bled for their country.

These brave fellows have indeed themselves borne ample testimony to the Character of Lord Howe. However unjust the clash of interests or views of ambition have rendered some individuals in the army in other instances, in speaking of this brother they have but one voice; and from the general to the common men, all hung down their dejected heads, when they saw the preserver of the British name in America sail from the coast. No shameless hireling could there misrepresent facts

the coast. I speak of a measure adopted previous to the fortuitous departure of Mr. Byron for America, and the man had too much vanity to conceal the unexpected honour that was intended him from his first arrival.

of

of which they had themselves been witnesses, nor gloss over, by false and delusive accounts, the neglect or treachery, no matter to them whether treachery or neglect, of the timid and dilatory measures pursued in the management of the navy at home, from the fatal effects of which his Lordship effectually rescued them, They owned themselves indebted to him for their safety and preservation, and with the same breath paid him their just tribute of praise for the signal triumph they saw him obtain over the enemies of their country. I repeat the words—the signal triumph they saw him obtain over the enemies of their country. If the plain narrative I have given to my readers, has not warranted me in their opinion to use such expressions, I am confident that a few reflections will make the public adopt the same language.

For this purpose it will be requisite to observe to them, that Congress were much better informed of the real state of our navy in America, at the beginning of this year, than the Lord at the head of the Admiralty acknowledged himself to have been. Its numbers and situation they represented to their new allies much more accurately than it suited his lordship's views and purposes to own to the English nation. They knew that the chief object of our armaments in the American seas, was the interruption of their

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trade,



trade, and the destruction of the small vessels they had been able to fit out. That for this service five sail of sixty-four gun ships, five fifties, with a certain number of frigates and sloops, were deemed amply sufficient, and were alone employed. That even this small force was constantly dispersed along the whole extent of the coast, as it must have been to answer its intent. That therefore an armament in force, planned with secrecy, and conducted with vigour and expedition, might warrant hopes of the most brilliant and decisive success. They might attack the British ships in detail, and defeat them piece-meal. The men of war being once destroyed, the transports and victuallers must fall of course. Cut off from every supply of provision, every means of retreat, the whole British army must fall an easy prey. The contest must be decided by a single blow, before the design could be suspected at home, or at least before any succours could be sent out to prevent the execution. Such were the just and well-grounded representations urged by the American agents to the French ministry; and D'E-  
 staing's expedition was planned in consequence. A force, equal to the design, was in immediate readiness. Such secrecy was observed, with regard to its destination, that the fleet had reached the longitude of the western islands, before the  
 French

French Admiral, by a formal declaration of war, on board the several ships of his squadron, opened the secret to his officers, and animated his men, by the prospect of the certain and easy conquest he set before them.

While our enemies were thus employed in vigorously pushing forward to the execution of the schemes they had so wisely planned for our destruction, the first Lord of the Admiralty thought his business done, if he could succeed in deceiving the nation. The friends of the constitution, and they who had the glory of their country at heart, were the only enemies he seemed to dread. Provided he could repel their attacks on his disgraceful administration, he was willing to trust the national safety and honour to chance. Hackneyed in the arts of deceit and misrepresentation, and encouraged by the slavish obsequiousness of a large majority of the constitutional guardians of our liberty, he made the grossest appeal to the credulity of the people, whose indignation he yet dreaded. With this view they were daily amused with pompous accounts of the flourishing state of our naval armaments; of the number of ships, ready manned and fitted, that *could be sent out* when occasion required. The preparations of the French were represented as trifling and insignificant, and assurances given that on our side the utmost care was  
taken

taken to rise occasionally beyond them, and still to maintain our usual superiority. Majesty itself was brought forward to favour the deceit, after having been first deceived, and every meretricious artifice of pomp and shew put in practice to cover our weakness. Under the hands of our state quacks, the nation assumed the false and transient flush of a consumptive patient, while she languished interiorly, and her whole frame was menaced with speedy dissolution. In vain did her friends represent her real situation, solicit, threaten, attempt every expedient to rescue her from the unskilful hands that had first destroyed her constitution, and would now flatter her to her ruin. In vain Lord Chatham uttered his inspiration in the house of peers, and with that voice which had so often spoke safety and confidence to the nation, call upon the servants of the King, to embrace the vigorous, preventive measures, which under his own auspicious administration, had crowned our arms with glory and conquest. The hardest bodies sparkle by collision; but in the cold hearts of our dastardly Ministers, not a spark could this great man kindle of the divine flame that consumed himself. The effects of his disappointment are too deeply engraved in the heart of every true Englishman to be forgotten. He found he had survived the British spirit, and gladly sunk under this last and glorious exertion



exertion of his powers to revive it. Death, happily for himself, however fatally to his country, rescued him from the misery and disgrace, of which his last breath, like that of dying good men of old, was, I fear, prophetic.

Peace to his ashes ! The mention of his name has deluded me from my subject. I meant to observe, that the most accurate and authentic accounts daily received of the forward preparations in the French ports ; the sailing of the squadron under La Mothe Piquet, and the object of its equipment, known beyond a doubt ; the declaration of war, for as such every man of common sense considered, from the first, the rescript delivered with such insolence by the French Ambassador in the name of his master ; the exultation and triumph of the American agents, who, notwithstanding their native sagacity and cunning, could not conceal their joy at the full success of their negotiations with the cabinet of Versailles ; the arrival of one of these agents at Toulon, and the preparations made for his reception, and the reception of Mr. Girard, on board the Languedoc, the stale subject of every public conversation ; the large quantities of merchandize for the American markets, with which our Ministers were well informed the fleet at Toulon was loaded ; the fulness of all these concurring circumstances, so  
clearly

clearly expressive of the designs of the French, was slighted and disregarded. At least what precautions were taken in consequence, but such as are to be found in the fine plausible speeches of the Ministry in both houses, or as were confined to the idle, ineffectual visits of the first Lord of the Admiralty, to the several dock-yards? Was not the important pass of the Mediterranean still left open and defenceless? Was a single ship sent to reinforce our commander there, or to put him in a condition even to observe the enemy, and inform Ministry of their motions? Were not the first accounts of the departure of the Toulon squadron, and the course they held, communicated to one of our residents by a foreign power, and by him transmitted home by land?

In the latter end of April, when this important intelligence was authenticated beyond a doubt, what part did our great and decisive Ministers take? They fought their battles with opposition, but suffered the enemy to proceed in triumph. The first was their great object. To succeed in it, they did not blush to magnify to their Sovereign and to the people, the preparations, which the day before, they affected to despise. The French fleet at Brest, was then declared to be in such force, that not a ship could be

be spared from our home defence.\* The destination of the Toulon squadron was not *certainly* known—their sailing in the direction they held might be a feint—if a squadron should be detached from our fleet in pursuit of them, they *might perhaps*, return to form a junction with D'Orvilliers, and give a decisive superiority over Admiral Keppel—though seen at a short distance from the western islands, yet they might have proceeded so far only to cover their design the more effectually—like Bayes's army, they might remain concealed, hanging in the clouds, we may suppose, till the intelligence of such a detachment having sailed from our fleet should reach them—they might then have tacked about, and, joined with the armament at Brest, pour such a resistless force on our coast, as must have swept all before it.

To what an abject state must the nation be reduced! How must her ancient spirit be broken, when a set of Ministers dare account for their tame and dastardly conduct by such a tissue of absurdities, who do not even scruple to profess, that they hold the understanding of our representatives in such utter contempt, as to think no reasons so flimsy or puerile, no measures of such desperate tendency, but they can

\* See Lord North's speech.



be certain of a majority of voices to support them in both Houses ; who have not even the decency to respect the sufferings they have entailed upon us, but openly and vauntingly exult in the triumph they have gained over the wisdom and common-sense of the nation ! The very reasons that should for ever exclude them from all confidence and trust, they shamefully urge as a certain plea to gain additional credit from the people. “ We were totally ignorant  
 “ of the state of our enemy, of their views  
 “ or designs, and were consequently fearful of  
 “ taking a decisive step in one quarter, lest the  
 “ attack should be meant against us in another.”

— Besides the impudence and effrontery of such a confession, are they not aware that this question still occurs—Why had ye not placed the navy of Great-Britain in a state to defy all the attempts of her enemies, in every quarter of the globe, as before the days of your inauspicious administration it had ever been ? Why was the fate of this once glorious empire made the sport of contingencies, and abandoned to probabilities and senseless conjecture ? Had ye not time enough to prepare for the trial ? or were ye fearful that the nation would have refused you the necessary supplies to defeat the intentions of her natural enemies, of which you had such long and manifest warning ? Did she  
 not

not comply with every demand, however enormous or extravagant? Did not the public treasures flow in as copious streams as ye chose to mark out, and in the channels you directed? Were you not convinced that the purse of every individual would be open to you, if once the national wealth should be applied to its proper use, and the navy of Britain, her only natural bulwark and defence, become an object of your attention?

The fact is, our Ministry had the earliest and fullest intelligence of the time the Toulon squadron sailed, of its destination, and the inevitable danger with which our forces in America were threatened, should D'Estaing succeed. But it is equally certain that, notwithstanding the immense sums that had been voted for the navy supplies for these three years past, the fleet was then so weak, shattered and out of repair, as not to afford a detachment adequate to the emergency. Almost two months were requisite to glean the old stores, that had lain rotting for years, in the different dock-yards, to strip the ships at Portsmouth of their rigging, and *splice and knot* cordage, that had been long condemned as unserviceable, to patch up masts and yards from the wrecks and remnants of a fleet, once the terror of the world; to sweep the prisons for men, infected with diseases, and unac-

customed to a sea-life. When, by all these wretched shifts and contrivances, a squadron of thirteen sail had been at length, we cannot say fitted out, but sent to sea, what were the consequences? They could not stand against a summer gale—Scattered and dispersed at the mercy of the winds and waves for almost three months, the wretched remains of Mr. Byron's fleet arrived at New-York, mostly dismasted and unrigged, and their companies so sickly, from the gaol infections brought by them on board, that in a seventy-four gun ship, only eighty men were capable of doing duty. The Vice Admiral himself, in a disabled ship, escaped with difficulty from the French fleet: he thought it a happiness to gain the port of Halifax, where he found part of his squadron in the same wretched condition with the ship in which he was himself embarked. Tho' it must be obvious to the most ignorant and abject retainer of the Ministry, that no expectations could, from the first, be formed of a squadron thus equipped; though they have been told repeatedly, that there is not an officer, serving in the squadron, who will not declare, upon his honour, that had the ships been in any tolerable condition, with respect either to men or furniture, they would not have even felt the force of the gale, by which they were so miserably shattered; yet  
have



have the abettors of the junto, with their usual effrontery, caught at this happy circumstance. They have expatiated on the subject with all the triumph of integrity, and a consciousness of having discharged their duty. They cannot, they say, contend with winds and waves—accidents may defeat the best designs—had this gale not separated the fleet, it would, in the common course of sailing, have gained the coast of America in sufficient time to defeat all the schemes of the Toulon squadron. To the facts which I have already related, that evidently refute this assertion, I shall add one observation — The Cornwall was not kept back by this gale; half of the way she made alone, unretarded by the disproportionate sailing of a squadron; yet she arrived not at the Hook till the 30th, and D'Estaing had been on the coast from the 5th.

After all, I may be told by the ministerial runners, that I have obtruded on the public a subject too trifling and inconsiderable to deserve their attention. The fate of our navy and army in America, which appeared of such consequence to those engaged in their defence on the spot, was far from being a principal object with our wise and prudent rulers. Their chief attention was employed in guarding the seat of the empire; and the operations in the Channel  
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of England engrossed all their thoughts, and dried up all their resources. Here then, we may suppose, all is victory and triumph ! Here are no disgraces to weep over——no murmurs, discontent, or complaint——no cause of complaining. At home it would seem, administration are under no necessity of having recourse to false representations——of seeking unjust pretexts to injure the reputation of the most experienced and distinguished officers of the navy, or to shift the public indignation from one of their own shameless junto, to a brave man, who preserved the nation from still greater infamy and disgrace. The just and forgiving Sandwich discovers no jealousy, it would seem, of the gallant Admiral, who joined the prudence of a statesman to the skill of a commander in chief, who dared to undeceive the public by his prudent conduct, and at the risque of a temporary imputation on his own character, rather than by their destruction; who, on discovering how false and impudent the assertions of that shameless Minister had been, and the great superiority of the Brest fleet, returned to port, if possible, to gain a reinforcement, rather than risque the existence of the British nation, in a contest, the most unequal and desperate.

Surely

Surely there is a point of tameness and passive forbearance, below which it is impossible that a nation should fall! and either our ministers have depressed us to that point, or the genius of Britain has deserted her for ever, and her ancient spirit hath been so effectually broken and subjugated, as never to be roused again. Insulted and threatened by every nation around us; engaged in open hostilities with France; on the eve of a war with Spain; Portugal, the child of our charity, deserted to our enemies; Holland adding insolence to ingratitude, and cavilling for pretexts to share the spoils of her ancient defender and faithful ally; the empire itself dismembered, and those provinces from which we derived wealth and power and consequence, torn from us for ever, and their inhabitants driven into the most relentless, inveterate enmity; the great sources of our treasure perhaps at this instant cut off, and thousands of the people reduced to beggary, by the loss of our West-India islands. Such is the prospect from abroad. At home, we are divided in our counsels: the betrayers of their country, who, in the course of a few years, have tumbled the nation from the height of glory, wealth, and power to which she had been raised in the last reign, and overwhelmed her in disgrace, beggary, and ruin, still triumph in their designs; are employed, cherished,



cherished, supported in their obstinate adherence to the same measures, which experience has proved to be pregnant with ruin and destruction; while the friends of the constitution, who have uniformly opposed those fatal measures, are slighted, set aside, and branded with the opprobrious imputation of faction, and disappointed party malevolence; officers are pitted against officers in private broils, and the utmost pains taken by the Ministers to foment their jealousies, and add fuel to their animosities; some among themselves, who had once gained the esteem and confidence of their corps, whose abilities were rated high, and whose character was respected, have not been ashamed to prostitute their name to this vile business, and, for the smiles of a wicked great man, to sell themselves to endless contempt and scorn. The most gallant of our commanders, in both lines of service, who had long flourished in the opinion and favour of their king and country, we see insulted, injured, their reputation whispered away, and loaded with the disgrace and infamy which legions of angels could not have prevented from attending the ignorant, weak, indecisive plans imposed on them from the cabinet, and which their duty to their king reduced them to the necessity of attempting to execute.

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In the mean time, the nation bleeds, from the fatal consequences of this mixture of folly and injustice. While the Ministers, are diffident of those gallant and high-spirited men, whom they are conscious they have basely injured; and while they, on their side, are incensed at the perfidy of administration, and shocked at the prospect of serving under a set of men, from whose councils nothing but disgrace and defeat can follow, our fleet remains without a commander; a strong squadron of the enemy are now, and for weeks past have been, cruizing in the Channel; and there is not a flag officer, of the least name, whom Lord Sandwich can ask to accept, or who, if asked, would accept, the command of an armament prepared to oppose them.

The people vainly flattered themselves that the meeting of parliament would have brought them some relief and rescued the nation from this ignominious, desperate state. They looked up to the hereditary counsellors of the throne, and guardians of our liberty; they looked up to the country gentlemen, whose interests are so deeply at stake, and whose independence, they hoped, was proof against venality and corruption; they looked up to their gracious and beloved Sovereign; they were in hopes that he would have been at length undeceived; that our repeated losses and disappointments, which must

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have wrung his paternal heart, would, at least, have rendered him diffident of the men from whose counsels they had proceeded, and have made him pay some attention to the numerous and respectable part of both houses of parliament, who uniformly protested against them, and counselled better things. Disappointed in their hopes from a quarter whence their duty, their confidence, their affection, made them form the greatest expectations, the moderate part of the nation tremble at the probable consequences; they fear lest the patience of the people should be tired down, and they forced to speak a language that *must be understood*. Our history affords but too many alarming instances of the violent extremes to which the spirit of the nation may be transported under such provocations.

Amidst all our afflictions, may we of the present age never experience that extreme of misery! May our gracious King continue to be respected, honoured, beloved, as his virtues deserve! May the public detestation be directed against the real authors of our disgrace, and confined to the only sacrifices, which can be made with justice, to an insulted, oppressed, and indignant people,

F I N I S,

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